

CLAIMS:

What is claimed is:

1 1. A method of displaying electronic mail messages,
2 comprising:

3 sorting a plurality of messages utilizing user-defined
4 sort criteria including at least one criterion which is not
5 alphabetic, chronological, or based on a previous viewing of
6 corresponding messages;

7 ordering the plurality of messages according to the user-
8 defined sort criteria; and

9 displaying the plurality of messages in the order
10 specified by the user-defined sort criteria.

11 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of sorting a
12 plurality of messages utilizing user-defined sort criteria
13 including at least one criterion which is not alphabetic,
14 chronological or based on a previous viewing of corresponding
15 messages further comprises:

16 sorting the plurality of messages based on a user-defined
17 prioritization of a sender's address for each message.

18 3. The method of claim 2, wherein the step of sorting the
19 plurality of messages based on a user-defined prioritization of
20 a sender's address for each message further comprises:

21 comparing a sender's address for each message to a ranked
22 list of senders' addresses.

1 4. The method of claim 3, wherein the step of comparing a
2 sender's address for each message to a ranked list of senders'
3 addresses further comprises:

4 comparing the sender's address for each message to a
5 ranked list of senders' addresses including a set of fixed
6 entries specified by a user and a set of dynamic entries
7 containing addresses selected from historical message tracking
8 information based on rules specified by the user.

9 5. The method of claim 3, wherein the step of comparing a
10 sender's address for each message to a ranked list of senders'
11 addresses further comprises:

12 comparing the sender's address for each message to a set
13 of senders' addresses specified by a user as higher priority
14 than other messages;

15 comparing the sender's address for each message to a set
16 of senders' addresses automatically selected based on
17 historical message tracking information as higher priority than
18 other messages;

19 comparing the sender's address for each message to a set
20 of senders' addresses specified by a user as lower priority
21 than other messages; and

22 comparing the sender's address for each message to a first
23 set of senders' addresses automatically selected based on
24 historical message tracking information as lower priority than
25 other messages.

26 6. The method of claim 2, wherein the step of ordering the

2 plurality of messages according to the user-defined sort
3 criteria further comprises:

4 ordering the plurality of messages with any messages
5 including a sender's address matching an address within a first
6 entry within the ranked list listed first, with any messages
7 including a sender's address matching an address within a
8 second entry within the ranked list listed second, and with any
9 messages including a sender's address matching an address
10 within any subsequent entry within the ranked list listed at a
corresponding position within an ordered listing of the
plurality of messages.

7. The method of claim 2, wherein the step of sorting the
plurality of messages based on a user-defined prioritization of
a sender's address for each message further comprises:

comparing a sender's address within each message to
addresses specified by a user.

8. The method of claim 2, wherein the step of sorting the
plurality of messages based on a user-defined prioritization of
a sender's address for each message further comprises:

comparing a sender's address within each message to
addresses selected from a historical tracking of previous
messages based upon rules specified by a user.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the step of comparing a
sender's address within each message to addresses selected from
a historical tracking of previous messages based upon rules

specified by a user further comprises at least one of:

selecting addresses from messages to which a user replies for higher listing within a sort order than addresses from messages to which the user never replies;

selecting addresses from messages to which a user replies more quickly than contemporaneous messages for higher listing within the sort order than other addresses;

selecting addresses from messages which a user opens more quickly than contemporaneous messages for higher listing within the sort order than other addresses;

selecting addresses from messages which a user opens more quickly than contemporaneous messages for lower listing within the sort order than other addresses; and

selecting addresses from messages which a user deletes without opening for lower listing within the sort order than other addresses.

1 10. A system for displaying electronic mail messages,
2 comprising:
3 an electronic mail client application;
4 a plurality of messages;
5 means for sorting the plurality of messages utilizing
6 user-defined sort criteria including at least one criterion
7 which is not alphabetic, chronological, or based on a previous
8 viewing of corresponding messages;
9 means for ordering the plurality of messages according to
10 the user-defined sort criteria; and
11 means for displaying the plurality of messages in the
12 order specified by the user-defined sort criteria.

1 11. The system of claim 1, wherein the means for sorting a
2 plurality of messages utilizing user-defined sort criteria
3 including at least one criterion which is not alphabetic,
4 chronological or based on a previous viewing of corresponding
5 messages further comprises:
6

7 means for sorting the plurality of messages based on a
8 user-defined prioritization of a sender's address for each
message.

1 12. The system of claim 11, wherein the means for sorting the
2 plurality of messages based on a user-defined prioritization of
3 a sender's address for each message further comprises:
4 comparing a sender's address for each message to a ranked
5 list of senders' addresses.

1 13. The system of claim 12, wherein the means for comparing a
2 sender's address for each message to a ranked list of senders'
3 addresses further comprises:

4 means for comparing the sender's address for each message
5 to a ranked list of senders' addresses including a set of fixed
6 entries specified by a user and a set of dynamic entries
7 containing addresses selected from historical message tracking
8 information based on rules specified by the user.

9 14. The system of claim 12, wherein the means for comparing a
10 sender's address for each message to a ranked list of senders'
11 addresses further comprises:

12 means for comparing the sender's address for each message
13 to a set of senders' addresses specified by a user as higher
14 priority than other messages;

15 means for comparing the sender's address for each message
16 to a set of senders' addresses automatically selected based on
17 historical message tracking information as higher priority than
18 other messages;

19 means for comparing the sender's address for each message
20 to a set of senders' addresses specified by a user as lower
21 priority than other messages; and

22 means for comparing the sender's address for each message
23 to a first set of senders' addresses automatically selected
24 based on historical message tracking information as lower
25 priority than other messages.

26 15. The system of claim 11, wherein the means for ordering the

2 plurality of messages according to the user-defined sort
3 criteria further comprises:

4 means for ordering the plurality of messages with any
5 messages including a sender's address matching an address
6 within a first entry within the ranked list listed first, with
7 any messages including a sender's address matching an address
8 within a second entry within the ranked list listed second, and
9 with any messages including a sender's address matching an
10 address within any subsequent entry within the ranked list
11 listed at a corresponding position within an ordered listing of
12 the plurality of messages.

13 16. The system of claim 11, wherein the means for sorting the
14 plurality of messages based on a user-defined prioritization of
15 a sender's address for each message further comprises:

16 means for comparing a sender's address within each message
17 to addresses specified by a user.

18 17. The system of claim 11, wherein the means for sorting the
19 plurality of messages based on a user-defined prioritization of
20 a sender's address for each message further comprises:

21 means for comparing a sender's address within each message
22 to addresses selected from a historical tracking of previous
23 messages based upon rules specified by a user.

24 18. The system of claim 17, wherein the means for comparing a
25 sender's address within each message to addresses selected from
26 a historical tracking of previous messages based upon rules

specified by a user further comprises at least one of:

means for selecting addresses from messages to which a user replies for higher listing within a sort order than addresses from messages to which the user never replies;

means for selecting addresses from messages to which a user replies more quickly than contemporaneous messages for higher listing within the sort order than other addresses;

means for selecting addresses from messages which a user opens more quickly than contemporaneous messages for higher listing within the sort order than other addresses;

means for selecting addresses from messages which a user opens more quickly than contemporaneous messages for lower listing within the sort order than other addresses; and

means for selecting addresses from messages which a user deletes without opening for lower listing within the sort order than other addresses.

1 19. A computer program product within a computer usable medium
2 for displaying electronic mail messages, comprising:

3 instructions for sorting a plurality of messages utilizing
4 user-defined sort criteria including at least one criterion
5 which is not alphabetic, chronological, or based on a previous
6 viewing of corresponding messages;

7 instructions for ordering the plurality of messages
8 according to the user-defined sort criteria; and

9 instructions for displaying the plurality of messages in
10 the order specified by the user-defined sort criteria.

11 20. The computer program product of claim 19, wherein the
12 instructions for sorting a plurality of messages utilizing
13 user-defined sort criteria including at least one criterion
14 which is not alphabetic, chronological or based on a previous
15 viewing of corresponding messages further comprises:

16 instructions for sorting the plurality of messages based
17 on a user-defined prioritization of a sender's address for each
18 message.

1 21. The computer program product of claim 20, wherein the
2 instructions for sorting the plurality of messages based on a
3 user-defined prioritization of a sender's address for each
4 message further comprises:

5 comparing a sender's address for each message to a ranked
6 list of senders' addresses.

1 22. The computer program product of claim 21, wherein the

2 instructions for comparing a sender's address for each message
3 to a ranked list of senders' addresses further comprises:

4 instructions for comparing the sender's address for each
5 message to a ranked list of senders' addresses including a set
6 of fixed entries specified by a user and a set of dynamic
7 entries containing addresses selected from historical message
8 tracking information based on rules specified by the user.

1 23. The computer program product of claim 21, wherein the
2 instructions for comparing a sender's address for each message
3 to a ranked list of senders' addresses further comprises:

4 instructions for comparing the sender's address for each
5 message to a set of senders' addresses specified by a user as
6 higher priority than other messages;

7 instructions for comparing the sender's address for each
8 message to a set of senders' addresses automatically selected
9 based on historical message tracking information as higher
10 priority than other messages;

11 instructions for comparing the sender's address for each
12 message to a set of senders' addresses specified by a user as
13 lower priority than other messages; and

14 instructions for comparing the sender's address for each
15 message to a first set of senders' addresses automatically
16 selected based on historical message tracking information as
17 lower priority than other messages.

1 24. The computer program product of claim 20, wherein the
2 instructions for ordering the plurality of messages according

3 to the user-defined sort criteria further comprises:

4 instructions for ordering the plurality of messages with
5 any messages including a sender's address matching an address
6 within a first entry within the ranked list listed first, with
7 any messages including a sender's address matching an address
8 within a second entry within the ranked list listed second, and
9 with any messages including a sender's address matching an
10 address within any subsequent entry within the ranked list
11 listed at a corresponding position within an ordered listing of
12 the plurality of messages.

13 25. The computer program product of claim 20, wherein the
14 instructions for sorting the plurality of messages based on a
15 user-defined prioritization of a sender's address for each
16 message further comprises:

17 instructions for comparing a sender's address within each
18 message to addresses specified by a user.

19 26. The computer program product of claim 20, wherein the
20 instructions for sorting the plurality of messages based on a
21 user-defined prioritization of a sender's address for each
22 message further comprises:

23 instructions for comparing a sender's address within each
24 message to addresses selected from a historical tracking of
25 previous messages based upon rules specified by a user.

26 27. The computer program product of claim 26, wherein the
27 instructions for comparing a sender's address within each

3 message to addresses selected from a historical tracking of
4 previous messages based upon rules specified by a user further
5 comprises at least one of:

6 instructions for selecting addresses from messages to
7 which a user replies for higher listing within a sort order
8 than addresses from messages to which the user never replies;

9 instructions for selecting addresses from messages to
10 which a user replies more quickly than contemporaneous messages
11 for higher listing within the sort order than other addresses;

12 instructions for selecting addresses from messages which a
13 user opens more quickly than contemporaneous messages for
14 higher listing within the sort order than other addresses;

15 instructions for selecting addresses from messages which a
16 user opens more quickly than contemporaneous messages for lower
17 listing within the sort order than other addresses; and

18 instructions for selecting addresses from messages which a
19 user deletes without opening for lower listing within the sort
20 order than other addresses.